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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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Dear Senator Hart:

In response to your request of October 19, 1971, we have examined into the inquiries contained in a letter to you from Miss Carolyn Berryman of the Hackley Public Library, Muskegon, Michigan. Specifically the letter raises questions concerning the publication of the EASTROPAC Atlas by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce. The atlas was published for use by the scientific public-professional oceanographers, marine chemists, and marine biologists--to stimulate further research and to provide base data for that research.

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EASTROPAC is an international cooperative investigation of the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean and is intended to provide data necessary for a more effective use of the marine resources of the area and to increase knowledge of ocean circulation, air-sea interaction, and ecology. The fieldwork for EASTROPAC was performed during the period February 1967 through March 1968. NMFS, formerly the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries of the Department of the Interior, is the coordinating agency. NOAA was established on October 3, 1970, by consolidating the Environmental Science Services Administration, Department of Commerce, with elements and programs of other Federal organizations, in accordance with the provisions of Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970.

In April 1968 the EASTROPAC Coordinating Committee of NMFS decided that the data obtained from the investigation were so numerous as to render typical data reports impracticable. Consequently the Committee decided that preliminary data processing and chart analysis would be performed by computer to save time and money and that a comprehensive 11-volume atlas of the results of physical and biological investigations would be produced. The atlas does not contain raw data but contains only the charts derived from analyzed and refined data.

The Committee also determined the size (16 in. by 21 in.) of the atlas and the type of binding. The size of the atlas and the type of the binding are designed so that individual pages may be removed for better comparative analysis. NOAA printed the EASTROPAC Atlas under its circular series because it did not have an established atlas series. Volume 4 was

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published in November 1970, and volume 2 was published in April 1971. A third volume is currently being printed at the Government Printing Office plant at San Francisco, California.

NOAA distributed the atlas to organizations which cooperated in the study, libraries of oceanography institutes, and other organizations engaged in similar research. The Superintendent of Documents distributed the atlas to the Hackley Public Library and other depository libraries under the Depository Library Program (44 U.S.C. 1900).

The Superintendent of Documents has established a classification system for grouping together all publications of any Government author--the various departments, bureaus, and agencies being considered the authors. Depository libraries, except designated regional depositories, are permitted to select the classes of publications they wish to receive. The Hackley Public Library, designated as a depository library in 1894, chose to receive all publications under the classification "Fish and Wildlife Service - Circulars." The EASTROPAC Atlas fell under this classification because NOAA had had it printed as part of the NOAA circular series.

The Superintendent of Documents is responsible for distributing Government publications to depository libraries that have selected certain titles or series of publications. Originating agencies have the responsibility for determining the size, format, sequence of issuance, and content of Government publications.

The Associate Administrator of NOAA on January 19, 1971, approved the establishment of an NOAA atlas series. An NOAA official informed us that the atlas series was still in the process of being established. The official also advised us that future publications under the NOAA circular series would be limited to a standard size of 8-1/2 inches by 10-1/2 inches. Upon establishment of the NOAA atlas series, future volumes of the EASTROPAC Atlas will be printed under the atlas series and only those depository libraries choosing to receive NOAA atlases will receive copies.

Depository libraries, such as the Hackley Public Library, that choose to receive the NOAA atlas series can reasonably expect to receive publications that are larger and more difficult to store than the typical book found in a public

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library. The Superintendent of Documents is currently exploring the possibility of offering depository libraries publications in microfilm, which would aid in solving the space problems faced by many libraries.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Elmer B. Staats

Comptroller General
of the United States

The Honorable Philip A. Hart
United States Senate